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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: COUNTRY CLEARANCE GRANTED FOR EUROPEAN REGIONAL AFFAIRS (EUR/ERA) OFFICER JOHN ROBINSON TO TRAVEL TO TURKEY MARCH 16-18, 2006

REF: STATE 38378

¶1. Mission welcomes and grants country clearance to European Regional Affairs (EUR/ERA) Officer John Robinson to travel to Ankara from March 16-18, 2006. The purpose of this trip is for consultations with embassies and host government officials. Embassy control officer for the visit is Political Officer Philip Kaplan, who can be contacted 24 hours/day via the embassy switchboard at (90)(312)455-5555, ext. 0.

¶2. Hotel information will be provided in separate e-mail.

¶3. Visas: All Americans traveling to Turkey must have a valid visa. Travelers without a visa can obtain a visa valid for one entry/three months at port of entry upon payment of a USD 20 fee. This fee is payable only in U.S. dollars cash. There is no fee for official travel if the visa is obtained outside of Turkey.

¶4. Health Safety: Information on vaccinations and other health precautions can be obtained from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention hotline for international travelers (tel: 1-877-394-8747); fax 1-800-232-3299; or via the internet at [HTTP://www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

¶5. Security Assessment: In the aftermath of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) there continues to be the potential for both transnational and indigenous terrorist groups to target U.S. interests in Turkey. After the Gulf War, the predecessor to the Turkish Terrorist Group Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C) assassinated four Americans in Turkey and carried out numerous bombings of U.S. targets (mostly private sector businesses, although two rockets were directed toward the Consulate General in Istanbul). Subsequent to the ending of OIF hostilities, there have been isolated terrorist bombings attributed to DHKP/C and other indigenous terrorist groups in protest of OIF. Other Turkish terrorist groups with anti-Western sympathies include Marxist-Leninist Communist Party (MLKP), Turkish Communist Party/Marxist Leninist (TKP/ML), Turkish Workers and Peasants Revolutionary Army (TIKKO) and Islamic Greater Eastern Raiders/Front (IBDA/C).

Al-Qa'ida threats to target U.S. facilities in Turkey have been public knowledge for some time. On November 15, two synagogues in Istanbul were the targets of suicide car bombs.

On November 20, the British Consulate General and the London-based HSBC bank in Istanbul were damaged by powerful explosions, killing dozens and wounding hundreds. These incidents represent a significant change from prior attacks in Turkey, which have previously involved small-scale, random bombings and small numbers of casualties. The investigations of these incidents in Istanbul remain open but transnational terrorist links are suspected. The potential for violence and terrorist actions against U.S. citizens and interests continue.

The Turkish National Police (TNP) is quite responsive in their role as protector of U.S. diplomatic and military interests in Turkey. The TNP has provided enhanced coverage at each of our facilities in Ankara, Istanbul, Adana and Izmir. The incidence of crime, both violent and the more traditional tourist crimes (pick pocketing, purse-snatching, etc.), is relatively low throughout Turkey. Visitors to Istanbul should be aware that tourist-type crimes are more prevalent there, especially in the traditionalist tourist areas, such as Sultanahmet and Istiklal Caddesi. The security office encourages visitors to report any security incidents, including surveillance, to the RSO immediately.

Useful security information about Turkey is available on the following websites:

--Embassy Ankara: [HTTP://WWW.USEMB-ANKARA.ORG.TR](http://WWW.USEMB-ANKARA.ORG.TR) (Click on Security Matters)

--Consulate General Istanbul:
[HTTP://USCONSULATE-ISTANBUL.ORG.TR](http://USCONSULATE-ISTANBUL.ORG.TR)

¶6. For further information regarding travel in Turkey, consult the consular information sheet. The consulate information sheet and public announcements are available on

the internet at: <HTTP://TRAVEL.STATE.GOV>

Other information is available on the following websites:

--The State Department Consular Affairs (CA) websites:

<HTTP://WWW.TRAVEL.STATE.GOV/TURKEY.HTML>

--US Embassy Ankara:

<HTTP://WWW.USEMB-ANKARA.ORG.TR>

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON